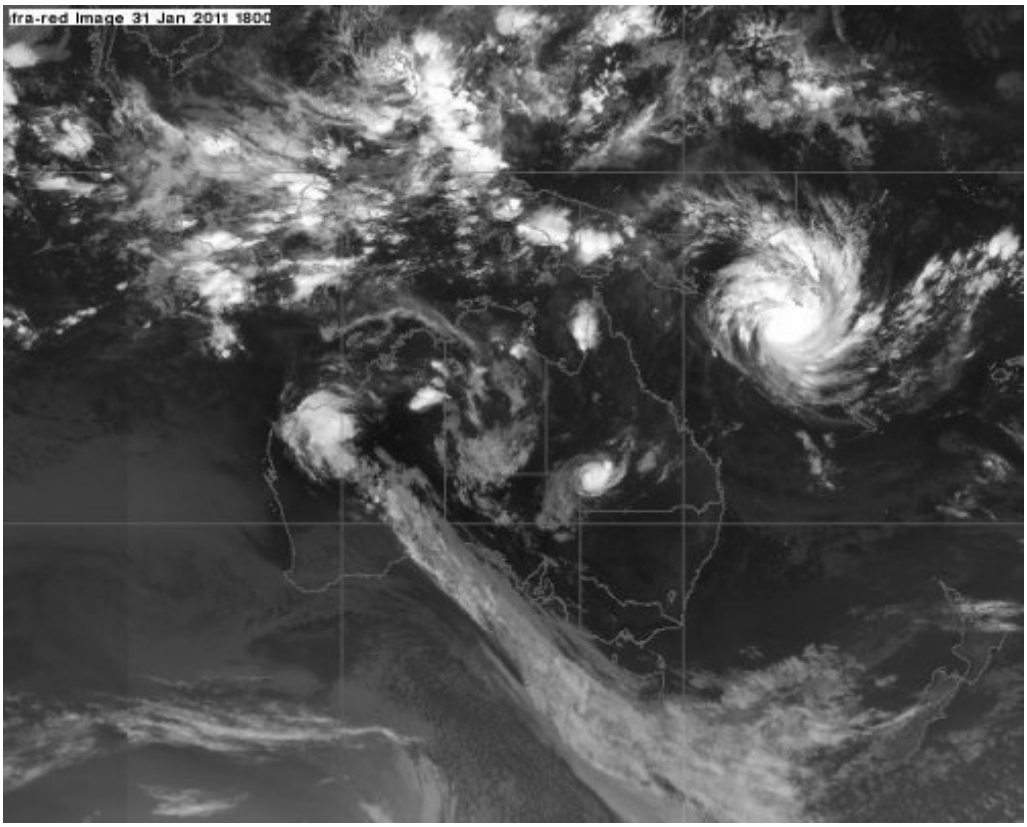
Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi heads for Queensland

Description

North East Australia is on alert as Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi heads for Queensland later this week. Those travelling to Australia should keep up to date with the latest forecasts from the Australian Bureau of Meteorology.

Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi already has winds close to 100 mph and is expected to strengthen further as it crosses the Coral Sea to make landfall on the coast of northern Queensland.



Satellite image showing Tropical Cyclone Yasi to the East of Australia (1800 GMT on 31 Jan 2011)

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology suggest heavy rain and damaging winds, in excess of 130 mph are expected to affect coastal and island communities between Cooktown and Yeppoon on Wednesday evening (local time), before spreading to other inland parts on Thursday.

The latest Met Office forecast has a very similar track and intensity for Yasi, and also maintains the cyclone well inland, as a significant depression. Although expected to come ashore north of where the worst of the recent flooding occurred, Yasi is a large cyclone and so will affect a wide area including some of the previously flooded regions. Very heavy rains are expected to continue as it moves towards central parts of Australia.

Using the Met Office Global Ensemble Prediction System (MOGREPS), the Met Office provides 15-day tropical cyclone forecasts of the most likely track of the storm and an understanding of the range of possible storm tracks. The system can also identify areas where a new storm is most likely to develop and then monitor the likely track of such storms.

The Met Office is providing forecasts to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and other National Meteorological Services around in the world, to provide the best advice on the expected movement of Tropical Cyclone Yasi. Frequent updates are also available via @metofficestorms on Twitter.

Date Created
January 2011

Met Office in the Media: 26 January 2010

Description

La Niña and its continuing impact on the worlds weather and its impacts elsewhere continues to be of interest. The Telegraph reported that La Niña is a danger to the economic recovery in which Dr Rob Allen provided some detail on how long this strong La Niña may continue for. The Wall Street Journal has also explored the effects of La Niña on the economy in La Niña provides big headache for CEOs.

Weatherfor, a unique, ground-breaking service powered by the Met Office has launched the Weatherfor Sports Apps for Apple's iPhone. The free apps initially available for golf, football and horseracing are powered by The Met Office, and are the first sport specific forecasts encompassing highly detailed, venue specific information for users, which for the first time in the UK, offer an hourly forecast allowing golfers, footballers and spectators to plan their round or match depending on the weather. It can also aid race goers and trainers when preparing for a race.

The new apps cover golf, football and horseracing and are linked to The Met Office, which Weatherfor says give them a 92 per cent accuracy rating when it comes to weather forecasts.

Earlier in the Week The Times recommended The Cloud Book, How to Understand the Skies by Richard Hamblyn and produced in association with the Met Office. In the article Paul Simons of the The Times says "The awesome photos in this book tell the story of how the weather behaves, which explains why folklore relied heavily on reading the sky for weather forecasts. But when names were given to identify clouds 200 years ago it launched modern meteorology, and also inspired a generation of artists and writers, from Constable to Shelley. And that's why *The Cloud Book* is a passport to deciphering the weather, and one of my most dog-eared books."

Date Created
January 2011

FCO offers support to Australia from joint Met Office and Environment Agency Flood Forecasting Centre

Description

Foreign Secretary William Hague today announced that Britain would provide assistance to the Australian Government in response to the recent flooding.

The British Government has offered to provide experts in flood recovery management and experts in advanced flood forecasting methods from the UK Flood Forecasting Centre.

“Australian authorities have performed brilliantly throughout this emergency, but we are happy to be able to share what practical support we can, including our experience of managing floods and their consequences. We are keen to do what we can both to deal with the effects of these dreadful events and to help with future planning,” Mr Hague said.

Advanced flood forecasting methods
The UK Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) is a partnership which combines expertise in meteorology from the Met Office and hydrology from the Environment Agency, to forecast river, tidal and coastal flooding as well as extreme rainfall which may lead to surface water flooding. As a dedicated team in one national centre, the FFC provides the best possible intelligence and support to existing Environment Agency flood warnings and Met Office weather warning services for England and Wales. This enables country-wide flood alerts with a long lead time, and information which is sufficiently accurate and precise to be targeted to emergency responders.

Date Created
January 2011

Heavy rain for parts of the UK this weekend

Description

Forecasters at the Met Office are monitoring the development of a slow-moving weather front, which could produce significant amounts of rain over the weekend.

A Met Office early warning has been issued for Cumbria for heavy rain, especially across the highest fells. Met Office advisories have also been issued for parts of Wales, North West England, Northern Ireland and much of southern and western Scotland.

Steve Willington, Met Office Chief Forecaster said: “Unsettled conditions will bring heavy and persistent rain through Saturday and into Sunday. The high ground of North West Wales and more particularly parts of Cumbria are likely to see the heaviest rainfall as the rain lingers across these areas into Sunday morning.”

The Environment Agency said: “With further rain forecast by the Met Office over the weekend, and the ground approaching saturation point, further flood alerts and flood warnings are likely to be issued. These may remain in place over the weekend and into next week.

“The heavy rainfall expected in Cumbria may result in some flooding of roads and some properties, although severe flooding, such as that seen in November 2009 is not anticipated.”

The public are advised to stay up to date with the latest weather forecasts and warnings on the Met Office website and get the latest information and sign up to free flood warnings by going to the Environment Agency website or calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188.

Related Stories:
Rain and flooding warnings issued
Cumbria weather warning as experts forecast 30 hour downpour

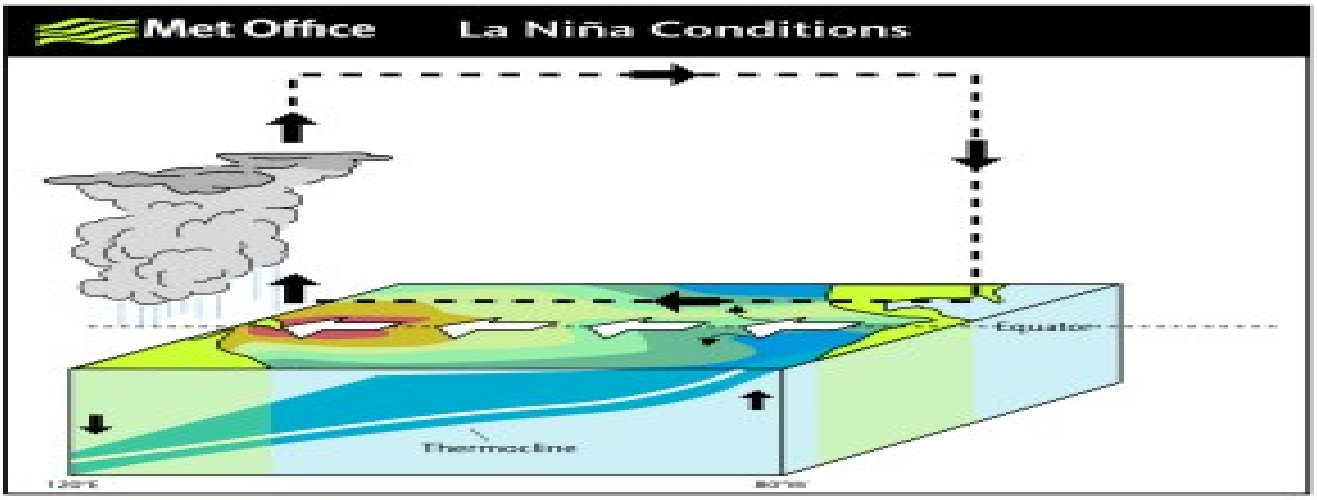
Date Created
January 2011

La Nina: in graphics

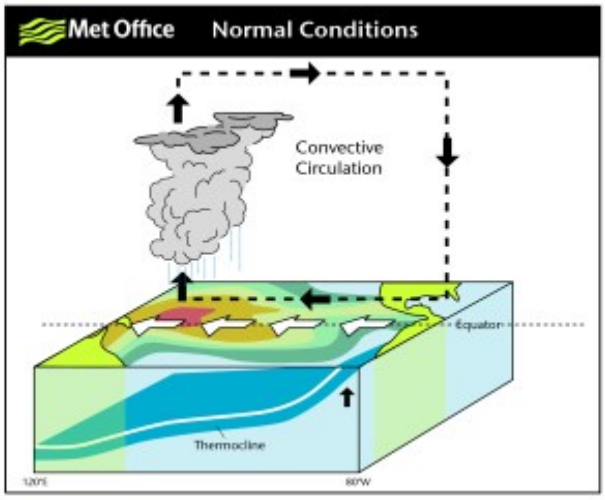
Description

The images below show the tropical pacific at times of La Nina conditions and times of neutral conditions.

Under La Nina conditions, the sea surface temperatures are cooler across the eastern tropical pacific, and as a consequence the atmospheric circulation is pushed further west. The area where air rises, and where convective rainfall occurs is therefore further west across Indonesia and Australia, rather than over the Pacific Ocean.

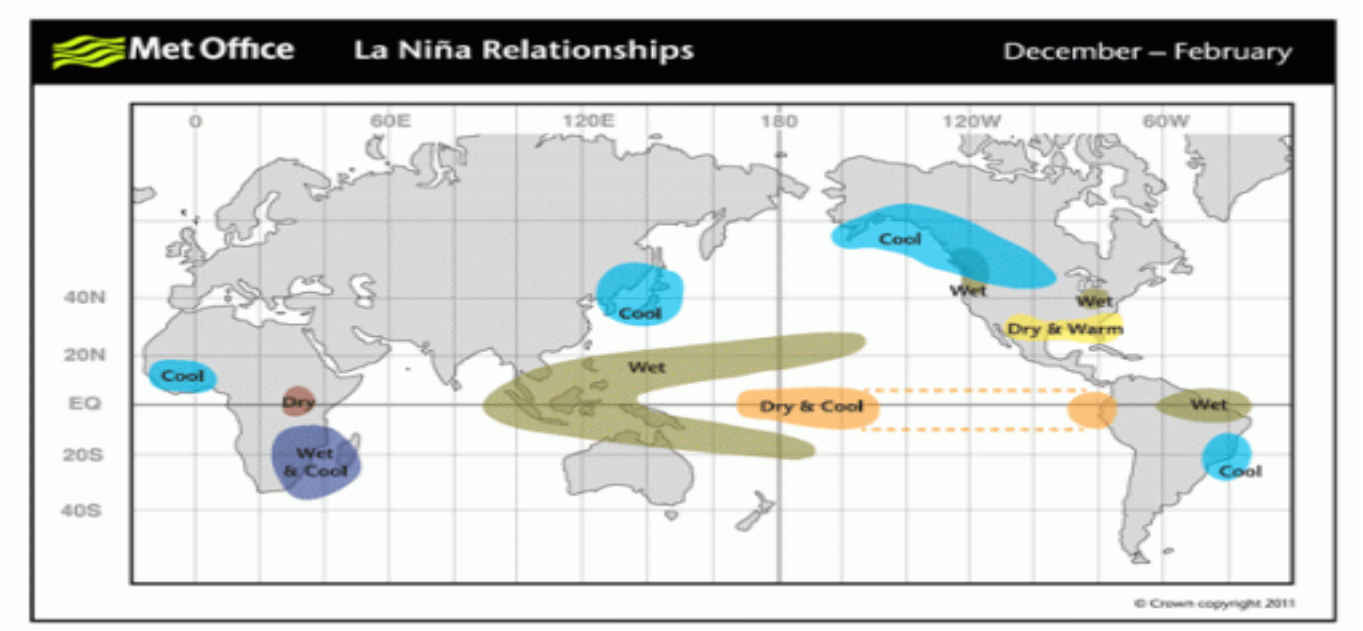


The tropical Pacific under La Nina conditions, and its impact on atmospheric circulation patterns.



The tropical Pacific under normal conditions, and the resulting atmospheric circulation patterns.

Finally the graphic below shows some of the clearer impacts that La Nina has on the weather around the globe. The graphic highlights areas where it may be wetter or drier or cooler or warmer than when there is no La Nina.



Map showing areas that may become wetter or drier or colder or warmer than normal when a La Nina is occurring

Date Created
January 2011

The impacts of La Nina on global weather

Description

The weather is making headlines around the world as heavy rain and flooding affects parts of Australia, Sri Lanka and Brazil. With a strong La Nina in place in the tropical pacific ocean at the moment the focus has been on whether this phenomenon is responsible.

Dr Adam Scaife a leading climate scientist at the Met Office Hadley Centre and an expert on La Nina and El Nino explains La Nina and its impacts in the video below.

Date Created
January 2011

Don’t believe all the climate headlines

Description

Steve Connor of the Independent has written a fascinating article today. ‘Don’t believe the hype over climate headlines’ is about a story that ran in the paper ten years ago with which ‘climate contrarians have been making much of’.

Steve makes some fine points about the difficulty for scientists and science journalists to find a balance between writing interesting stories that catch the eye of the reader (the fundamental job of a good journalist) and the difficulties and conveying all the tiny caveats and nuances that go with science stories, especially those about climate science.

The case Steve refers to is about the likely chances of snowfall in the future under climate change. The headline used 10 years ago was “Snowfalls are now just a thing of the past”, but I can assure you that no self respecting climate scientist would ever make such a bold statement, not today or ten years ago.

The reason for this is quite simple – that kind of statement is just not true when taken out of context of the whole article that deals with all those caveats and nuances that can be so hard to understand.

The bottom line is that snow was and still is never going to vanish from our weather, although how often we see snow may well change. Snow and cold are part of the natural variability of our changing day-to-day weather.

Date Created
January 2011

Met Office in the Media: 8 January 2011

Description

Snowy weather pushed north across parts of the UK yesterday bringing snow to some areas as expected. The snow was fairly temporary for many as rain followed and tended to melt the snow that had fallen. Overnight snow fell across parts of southern and eastern Scotland, leading to the closure of Edinburgh airport, with 7cm recorded at Edinburgh and as much as 10cm across other parts of eastern Scotland.

We had issued severe weather warnings of heavy snow for several Scottish regions, including Grampian, Strathclyde, Central, Tayside and Fife, south-west Scotland and Lothian and Borders. Further falls of snow are expected across parts of Scotland through today.

Elsewhere across the UK, it is much milder, and the snow of yesterday has quickly thawed.

This snow is certainly not a return to the “big freeze” of last month and the sudden snow would “vanish as quickly as it arrived”, Helen Chivers, forecaster at the Met Office, said: “Really, it’s just normal wintry weather we’ve got over the next few days. As we go into next week, it’s going to be very much milder.” reports The Sun.

Elsewhere the Evening Standard has run a story suggesting the London Olympics in 2012 are at risk of being affected by a solar storm that could lead to problems with infrastructure. This follows evidence the Met Office gave to the parliamentary Science and Technology sub-committee last October. However the story has been reported rather dramatically.

The Met Office is not making any prediction that an intense solar storm, and associated disruption, will occur during the next solar cycle. Indeed, this sort of prediction is simply not possible for anyone to make this far ahead.

However, increased activity of solar storms is known to occur around or just after the solar maximum with the next expected around 2012 or 2013 and work directed by the Cabinet Office is underway to identify a properly reasonable scenario to inform the UK’s contingency planning.

Space weather is a relatively new science but understanding is growing rapidly and here at the Met Office we are building on our existing capabilities to develop a resilient operational warning service. We are working with the NOAA Space Weather Prediction Centre in the US to enable both organisations to advance the science more rapidly, to accelerate the development of improved models and space weather.

Date Created
January 2011

Climate figures for December 2010 and the year 2010

Description

There is widespread interest in the cold weather through December 2010 and what this means for UK climate statistics.

Following early statistics up to the 28th December issued between Chrismas and New Year, the Met Office will issue provisional statistics that cover the whole of December and 2010 on Wednesday 05th January on the Met Office website.

Date Created
January 2011

Met Office in the Media: 04 January 2011

Description

Following an article in the Radio times on Roger Harrabin, Environment Analyst with BBC News, the Daily Mail have followed up with stories highlighting how the Met Office provided forecasts for this winter to the Cabinet Office, that indicated the risk of a cold start to the season.

We provided a long-range forecast to the Cabinet Office at the end of October highlighting the risk of a cold start to the winter. This forecast is used by government officials across the UK to support long-term planning. We offer a 30 day forecast on our website which accurately highlighted the cold weather in late November and through December.

We do not issue long-range forecasts to the public, as following research they have told us that they are of little use to them and they would prefer forecasts for shorter timescales. Therefore we offer forecasts for 6 to 15 days and 16 to 30 days ahead on our website.

The Daily Telegraph also followed up on the story in today's paper, but has mistakenly reported that the BBC has decided to publish independent assessments of the Met Office's performance on its website. In fact, Roger Harrabin has begun a project within BBC News to evaluate the accuracy of weather forecasters across the UK, looking at forecasts from 1 day ahead to 3 months ahead. The Met Office welcomes this initiative, engaged in the initial public workshop meeting and will provide input when asked by the project.

Date Created
January 2011